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CONSIDERATIONS

UPON THE

USE AND ABUSE

OF

O A T H S

JUDICIALLY TAKEN.

PARTICULARLY IN RESPECT TO

P E R J U R Y.

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By the Rev. ROBERT POOL FINCH, D.D.

PREBENDARY OF WESTMINSTER, AND RECTOR OF ST. JOHN  
THE EVANGELIST IN THAT CITY.

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“ HE WHO SWEARETH AS HE WHO FEARETH AN OATH.”

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THE SECOND EDITION.

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T O

Tho. Butterworth Bayley, Esq; F.R.S.

OF HOPE, NEAR MANCHESTER.

DEAR SIR,

WHEN you favoured me with your last obliging visit, a conversation arose relative to the Society for promoting CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE; to which, after repeated benefactions, you have given your very respectable testimony as a subscribing member.

You remarked, with great justice, upon the excellent provision made by it, from an abundant variety of well-

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adapted tracts, for the instruction and benefit of mankind in every view of most substantial good, temporal and eternal.

One omission, however, struck you, which, from the goodness of your heart as a true, practical, believer in the glorious contents of the Gospel, and from your experience, as a vigilant and conscientious magistrate was, indeed, very proper to be noticed: I mean, what you will from your earnestness readily recollect, some treatise suited to popular use upon the subject of Oaths, and particularly pointed as a dissuasive from and a guard against that dreadful and predominant crime called Perjury. Which no man of established principle can think of without trembling, and nothing but extreme ignorance, or abandoned bold-



boldness, can be induced to commit. As I had a fullness of feeling with you upon this melancholy topic, not trusting to my memory, though likely in this instance to be correct, I searched our catalogue, and do not find that provision, which is so desirable. In failure of it, such Considerations are here suggested as, it is hoped, may tend, under certain circumstances, to convince and controul the human mind. That this may be the good effect of your hint upon so very important a subject is the fervent wish of One long and earnestly devoted to the Society's Service, and ambitious of your Esteem as an affectionate Friend,

The AUTHOR.

WESTMINSTER,  
OCT. 16, 1788.

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# CONSIDERATIONS

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**T**HE Rights and Enjoyments of mankind, considered in a social state, that is, a state of mutual connection, dependence, and subordination, which is the only rational description of creatures circumstanced as they are, require a variety of provision in order

to the preservation and stability of them. For, so it is, the irregularities growing out of their own abused nature and situation make such aids and instruments unavoidably necessary to counteract the bad influence of Folly and Vice. One main expedient, and indeed, the ultimate and most effective, is the use of OATHS, which, not merely assertory or promissory between man and man for the security of particular confidence, but judicial and public, upon trials respecting property and life, hath been adopted and countenanced by all civilized Nations. To which practice, so obvious to REASON, there can be no doubt but REVELATION did always, and does certainly now, under the last dispensation of God's will, give a fullness of sanction. If this was a clear point under Patriarchal government and the Mosaic law, with the concurring force of precept and practice as then prevailing, it is under the Gospel still more authoritatively and decisively fixed and exemplified; in compliance with what we are most solemnly assured of, that God, having no greater, either person or tribunal, with whom or where to lodge an appeal, "sware by



by himself." Vain in the very worst sense, as such appeals to gods, falsely so called, the fictions of mens minds, or the works of their hands must be, those made with becoming solemnity to the one living, self-existing, true God, must be convincingly proper and profitably operative in their tendency. It does not appear, therefore, that the Israelites were ever condemned because they swore by HIM. The condemnation was for swearing by them who were no gods. Herod, though a profligate man, considered an oath as a solemn sanction, and was hurried into a wanton prostitution of it, when he barbarously sacrificed the life of John the Baptist to the extravagance of his admiration for the daughter of Herodias. Herod, in this case, kept his word to a fault, because his oath was not conformable to the will and command of God. He should not have sworn. Having done so, he should have repented, and not executed his horrid purpose upon that unwarrantable pretence. It cannot reasonably be accounted an offence to the Creator himself to make use of his name on solemn occasions; because, when attended with revere-

rence and sincerity, it is the most expressive acknowledgment of his sovereignty and our dependence; an open recognition of his omnipotence, justice, wisdom, and truth. A sufficient ground therefore for an injunction to his people, that they should swear by Him and his Name. Nothing but the weakness of idle scruple, or the obstinacy of blind perverseness, can hesitate about a compliance with what is thus surroundingly justified by declaration, by consent, and by habit. The ground of this custom, as was before intimated, is certainly to be lamented, however indispensable its application; for its necessity arises from that aptness to start from the rule of right, which is the effect of a freedom of action essential to human nature. But, *this* being permitted by Him who made us, surely, it is a part of wisdom to provide for the controul of it by every suitable and coercive mean, such especially as most commands reverence and checks the presumption of rash and daring impiety. The cause therefore of righteousness and truth, which the Lord from heaven professedly descended to maintain, is so represented in his own

conduct\*, and so recommended to that of others, that there can be no doubt of solemn judicial swearing, or, in other words, of an oath legally and officially taken, being not only allowable, but in certain cases laudable and right, as *that* which is supposed to be irresistibly binding upon the consciences of mankind, and as giving full and final force to their several obligations. There is in this respect, amongst Christians, an almost universal consent. One sect indeed of a pecu-

\* Our Lord, indeed, may be said, not so properly to *swear* as to *be sworn*, (Matt. xxvi. 23.) “I adjure thee by the living God,” said the high priest. But though that blessed Person was so ingenuous as to answer directly and most affirmatively; bearing witness to the truth, being, as he declared, the great end of his coming into the world; yet, since cavils may arise about this method of adjuring, the tie seems to be firmer and more indissoluble, when the oath is *actively* administered agreeably to our own practice. Hence arises a particular argument for endeavouring to support the solemnity and reverence which are due to it, and such as should alarm all persons in authority, lest by a most unwarrantable supineness in them, they betray the cause of truth and justice, make government a nullity, and desecrate the law of God.



liar cast objects to it; but their objection relates rather to the mode of doing than the thing done: for no Quaker can *affirm* without an appeal to God as witness, making himself answerable for his conduct in the instance at the bar of his Supreme Judge. The Moravians\* have the like indulgence with the Quakers; but both are excluded from testimony in criminal cases as well as serving on juries, and equally liable, if detected in falsifying where their affirmation is admitted, to a prosecution for perjury. This is mentioned upon the authority of Dr. Burn, in whose book of ecclesiastical law there is a longer detail of different sorts of oaths, or rather different occasions of taking them, than one would wish to find. Some of these are, it may be supposed, obsolete; and if others, easy to be particularized, which are required at present by common law, were so too; society would be in a safer situation, and individuals less depraved. Multiplication in this way is very hazardous, and has a tendency to defeat the very purposes, with

\* 22 Geo. II. c. 30.



a view to which an oath is administered and taken. The short of the matter is, that, both from the nature of man and the nature of things, there arises a *necessity* for OATHS in a judicial sense, whenever the dearest privileges, interests, properties, and enjoyments of mankind are at stake, inasmuch as without this sanction distress and confusion of the very worst kind must ensue.

“ This practice is of so great consequence, that human society would scarce be kept in tolerable order by any other means. For, could we suppose a neglect of it to become general throughout a large nation, especially one enjoying wealth and commerce, and liberty: could we suppose the different sorts of persons in it to be released from what they looked on as their strongest obligation to truth, it is easy to see, that universal confusion must unavoidably follow; and there is not any age or nation of the world but have shewn that they were sensible of this. All governments have ever required the most highly esteemed of their subjects, on every fit occasion, to confirm their testimony by an appeal to God; for, if it is not demanded  
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of every one who is able to give it with a good conscience, how can it be expected of any?"

We see then, without needless enlargement, or calling in authorities from writers, ancient or modern, there is, in the course of human affairs, a necessity for oaths and their application; because, in many cases, both satisfaction and security depend upon their use, so long as men swear, agreeably to Jeremiah's direction, "in truth, in righteousness, and in judgment."

The great point is to provide for their SOLEMNITY, and to establish their FORCE and INFLUENCE; which can only be done by instilling into the mind, in due season, good principles, and arming the law with certain vengeance in case of PERJURY; that is, deliberate and wilful breach of oath; by representing, at all fit opportunities, as persons properly interested ought to do, the desperate consequences of thus most unnaturally and daringly trifling with the GREAT GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH: HIM, who cannot in any way, especially this most insulting one, be "mocked" with impunity, but will pursue,

due, in the order of his government, such offenders, and make them examples of his judgement.

It may be right to introduce here a definition, or general description, first, of an OATH, and then of PERJURY, as leading to subsequent considerations upon this subject. An OATH then solemnly taken, in a court of justice, or upon any legal and warrantable occasion, is *this*, the swearing *by*, in the name *of*, or calling *upon*, God, the sovereign of all things, as witness to the truth of whatever we affirm, deny, or profess to know, believe, and act, as we hope for his protection and blessing, or dread his vengeance, using this expression when we deliver the sacred book, upon whose contents we swear, "SO HELP ME GOD!" And the definition, or general description of PERJURY, seems to be *THIS*, SWEARING, or taking an OATH, deceitfully and falsely, whilst we know what we assert is not true, or what we undertake is not designed, but pretended to be so, in order to serve some unjustifiable purpose or end of iniquitous craft; to injure the innocent, or screen the guilty; and so to defeat  
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the aim of justice, law, and government. PERJURY, in short, is falsehood in the extreme, and with the utmost aggravation, as it "mocks" God, and distresses man, and tends to the subversion of every social good; of every most valuable possession and enjoyment, even life itself. These respective definitions of the DUTY and the CRIME do, I believe, accord with and comprehend what the writers upon this topic have severally or jointly laid down as politically and morally right, and what cannot but continue to be so, with a view to both human and divine law\*. It must, therefore, be of unspeakable importance to society, and of eternal moment to individuals, to be most circumspectly guarded in this (for so it is in the fullest sense) *religious* act; and, if *any abuses* of it are discovered, to correct them, and to prevent their increase by every possible

\* Bud. Episcop. Limborch, Puffendorf, Saunderson, Blackstone. Sir Edward Coke defines perjury to be a crime committed, when a lawful oath is administered, in some judicial proceeding, to a person who swears wilfully, absolutely, and falsely in what is material to the issue in point or question. 3 Inst. 164.



expedient which can be applied. In saying which one cannot avoid adverting to SUBOR-NATION to perjury, that is, tempting others, the unwary, ignorant, and needy, into it, by bribes and attractive lures, to the joint hazard of the delinquents in respect of *time* as well as of eternity; for our laws are far from overlooking, however daringly it may be committed in defiance of them, this most atrocious sin\*. That such abuses should arise

\* Our present law, judge Blackstone observes, has adopted the opinion of Cicero (derived from the law of the Twelve Tables) *perjurii pœna di-vina; exilium; humanæ, dedecus*. The divine punishment of perjury is destruction; human punishment, disgrace.

Whatever mildness this discovers in the legislators, it proves at once their abomination of the crime, and what their thoughts were of a future reckoning, and its consequences; that they looked up to the Judge of all the earth. It may be proper here briefly to state how the law now stands respecting perjury. Judge B. says, “ It is punished, by a statute of 5 Eliz. c. 9, with six months imprisonment, perpetual infamy, and a fine of 20 l. or to have both ears nailed to the pillory. But the prosecution is usually carried on for the offence at common law; especially as, to the penalties before inflicted, the statute 2 Geo. II. c. 25, super-adds a power for the court to order the offender to be sent

arise at any time, and under any circumstances, is a melancholy proof of sad depravity in the human heart; but that they should be known under that fullness of instruction, and perfect ministration of righteousness, with which we are blessed, betrays an insensibility that must astonish and confound every serious and attentive observer. However, the evil, when seen and felt, as in our day it is, ought to be vigilantly adverted to, and strenuously opposed. For a practice so notoriously wicked, and so destructive, as *that* of forswearing oneself is, carries in its common tendency something so obviously alarming, that human laws have never been quite inattentive to the mischiefs thus produced; but in different countries, and at different times, have studiously provided for the public disgrace and punishment of such as have been convicted of it: in

sent to the house of correction for a term not exceeding seven years, or to be transported for the same period; and makes it felony, without benefit of clergy, to return or escape within the time.

By the law of France, upon a principle of retaliation, the punishment is capital.

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some instances, even to the infliction of death. Which, if justifiable in regard to any other crime besides that of murder, seems to be remarkably so in *this*, where not only CHARACTER and PROPERTY, but LIFE is exposed to the unbridled malevolence of a profligate heart. *Retaliation*, which has been warranted by divine as well as human authority, may here be said to be most equitably applicable, and could indeed be in scarce any supposable instance unduly severe.

FORGERY, by the law of our land, is subject, and with good reason, to the sentence of DEATH. But, if it is, surely, upon comparison, PERJURY cannot be entitled to milder treatment; but, (when viewed in its consequences and effects, and considered with this dreadful and *peculiar* aggravation, the calling\* upon the God of truth to be witness to a lie, and, *that*, whilst the attestation is sealed by profanely handling the "word of life," and putting our lips to the holy gospel of Christ,) such a presumption

\* It is no less than saying, "Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God." Pf. xxxviii. v. 15.



must "cry aloud" for more signal punishment than that which is its present *most evidently* incompetent recompence. The check, as the law now stands, is by no means adequate; if it was, how little soever the influence of internal principle may be, a regard to personal safety would sometimes operate to the prevention of social abuses and social distress; such as under circumstances of extended and *complicated* commerce, when contrivances to support the credit of some, and to delude the confidence of others; avail themselves of every expedient, even at the expence of all moral and religious ties, to accomplish the most profligate purposes and ends.

There is a particular kind of oath, or swearing, called an affidavit, distinguished, if I mistake not, in law books, as an oath in support of written evidence, or some matter expressed in writing. This is taken, sometimes, before law officers, such as masters in chancery, with a view to ascertain truths of consequence to individuals, or society, and sometimes, as in the case of burying in woollen, before magistrates or clergymen, whose province it is to take cognizance of  
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proceedings thus connected with the course of government and the security of its rights; or, again, to set forth the circumstances of persons interested in procuring beneficence, or justice, by a reasonable claim to the one, or a well-grounded pretence to the other. In the taking and administering OATHS, under these descriptions, there ought to be a very reverential attention; and as they, whose great care it should be to "MAINTAIN TRUTH," should make this a serious business, so ought they, who engage in this way, to act under a fullness of serious concern and settled conviction; and as to the last mode of an affidavit, all magistrates ought to be careful not to trifle with a charge so solemnly vested in them, lest artifice and collusion should shelter themselves under appearances of distress and poverty (perhaps wilfully and profligately brought on) in order to deceive the unwary, and procure undeserved bounty in their relief. This is, undoubtedly, the prostitution of an oath, and should be vigilantly guarded against by official circumspection.

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However, as to human laws, their suitability, competency, and execution, ALL THAT must be left in other hands. The principal design of this undertaking is, from a sad conviction and an universal lamentation, in every quarter, of the shocking PROSTITUTION of OATHS in courts of judicature, and upon the more ordinary occasions, (not always necessary) for their use and application, to impress the minds of all who are concerned in taking, or administering, or in any respect countenancing, and being parties to these, and to bring them to a serious recollection and a guarded habit, whenever a *sanction* so very peculiar, so very sacred, and so eternally portentous, is introduced. These terms cannot be too strong, when we remember that the "God of judgment, by whom actions are weighed," is Himself invoked and appealed to; and that our own salvation is, as it were, embarked in the *business*; which is of so distinguishedly serious a nature, that it would be well, if often, if perhaps always, upon going into it, this never to be forgotten question of our Redeemer was silently put to himself by each

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individual, "WHAT SHALL A MAN GIVE IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUL?" Experience teaches us, that, for want of such attention, a most deplorable "shipwreck of faith and conscience" is made in a variety of instances, and, God not being properly and prevailingly in the thoughts of men, they indulge a presumption, which, in its fatal progress, bids defiance to Heaven; and threatens, nay has sometimes brought, perdition to themselves. Even common swearing, positively forbidden by our Saviour, probably for *this*, as well as other most obvious reasons, is an encouragement to them who practise it to commit the more enormous and most extravagant crime of PERJURY; for God's name being thus habitually taken in vain leads insensibly to a callousness of mind, which no serious expostulation will touch, nor the most powerful mean of conviction awaken to duty. "Common swearing (says an excellent writer) is a kind of *habitual perjury*. It makes the soul inattentive to what an *oath* is even while it utters it at the lips." What a Call is there then upon all persons, who acknowledge A  
 God,



GOD, (and surely there is no such fool to be found who will, bad as his heart may be, say with his tongue there is none) to discover the extremest reverence for his Name and Attributes; who, whether solemnly invoked, or silently adored, is essentially present to them, who “live and move in Him, and spieth out all their ways.” But with what a peculiar force should this Call affect them, who know what “pure Religion” is, and who see the ALLMIGHTY in the brightest display of his GLORIOUS PERFECTIONS? How should it alarm and pervade all CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS, and inspire them with caution, circumspection, and resolution, to guard against, counteract, and suppress a wickedness so malignant in itself, so dangerous and destructive to society, so subversive of character, property, and life, and so notoriously disgraceful to our most holy profession? It should seem as if, in such a case, no man can wait for example, but that every one will be emulous to give it in his own practice, where the divine honour, and the most important interests of human nature, temporal and eternal, are depending. For not



only the wretched criminal, who, however tempted by bribe, by malice, by revenge, or by any partiality, or iniquitous prejudice, or ensnaring collusion, at all hazards, takes an OATH to answer any particular end, is concerned in stemming the torrent of this shockingly predominant and most reproachfully *national* sin; but every order and every rank of men, they especially, who are the Teachers of Religion, and ALL, who preside in any legal capacity, or are officially engaged in administering oaths to others; since it is easy to discern, that however the thing done may directly affect only a single party, who is to answer for truth or falsehood, the manner of doing it comprehends others, whose conduct, address, advice, and direction have, and must have, certain connection with this very solemn business, and will, as they are rightly discovered or not, have a very different influence and effect.

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\* Archbishop Secker, Serm. XIII. Vol. IV. read this and the preceding sermon.

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observes) nay, often as bad, and sometimes worse, if possible, is that of inducing others to be perjured: a sin, which is committed, not only by direct hiring them to swear falsehoods, but, by awing and intimidating, by courting and flattering, by intimating advantages to them, if they can only swear so or so, by talking them into a persuasion of what they were not fully persuaded of before, and thus making them strain hard to believe that they know or remember more or less than they do." These and other like artifices, wherever they take effect, seem to transfer, in a great measure at least, the guilt from the confounded to the confounding; but they can exculpate no man for rashly presuming upon the swearing an oath without duly considering to whom he appeals, and what account he must hereafter give for his conduct, in the particular instance, at the Bar of God. A man, in any way wilfully forsworn, is an object, to use the words of the forecited author, ' of universal abhorrence.' He deserves to be so in all cases; he is so in most; and if, in any, a person, who is known to be such, can be



looked on with the same eye as his neighbours, just in the degree which this [connivance] prevails, human society tends to a dissolution. Every member of it, therefore, is concerned to express his detestation of so impious and destructive a crime. LAW-MAKERS ought to enact the most EFFECTUAL provision against it. MAGISTRATES ought to put them in execution with PECULIAR VIGOUR: and every method should be taken to render the very imagination of such WICKEDNESS alarming to men. One method would be, to administer oaths with greater solemnity than is now usual; which is, indeed, shamefully neglected. Another, to appoint as few of them as possible. Oaths given and taken *frequently* will be given and taken irreverently, till at last many will regard them very little more than they do common swearing. How much this is now the case with ourselves the most alarming proofs of extreme profanation continually evince; and they do plainly discover, that, in the view of national virtue, we are nearly undone. But let us, before our "feet stumble upon the dark mountains," and

desolation overwhelms us, try every expedient which may rouse us from our lethargic state, and bring us back to a just sense of our duty to God and man. The SACREDNESS OF AN OATH is not only the uniform dictate of Reason, and a most distinguished lesson of Scripture, but is illustrated and enforced even by Heathen Practice and Mahometan Veneration. These are, indeed, lower motives, but they speak to our feelings with peculiar force, and should conspire to fill us, upon better principles than theirs, with all the uniform impression of religious awe. Such was the influence of an OATH among the *Romans*, (in their uncorrupted state) that nothing bound them stronger to the laws. They often did more for the observance of an OATH than they would ever have done for the thirst of glory, or for the love of their country \*. In the Koran are these expressions : “ perform your covenant with God when ye enter into covenant with him; and *violate not* your OATHS after the

\* Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws. This remark is supported by the best authorities.

ratification, since ye have made God a witness over you. Verily God knoweth that which ye do ; ye shall surely give an account of that which ye have done. Therefore take not your OATHS between you *deceitfully*, lest your foot slip after it hath been stedfastly fixed, and ye taste evil in this life, and suffer a grievous punishment in the life to come \*.”

What must apostate Christians think of themselves when they recollect their having most presumptuously trifled with the God of judgement, either by swearing deceitfully and falsely themselves, or by encouraging and prevailing upon others to do so, by PERJURY or by SUBORNATION, who thus most insolently provoke Him to “ take vengeance of them,” whilst in the very act of acknowledgement they, by their inconsistency, disavow Him? They must, and so must all such abandoned sinners, if the hardness of their hearts will admit a moment’s serious thought, do, as Felix did when St. Paul

\* Koran of Mohammed, Sale’s translation. Part of these words is thought by some to relate to their oath of fidelity to Mohammed ; but, no doubt, the context is general.



reasoned of "righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come," TREMBLE. God grant that such, whom it concerns, may make the instant of compunction a "convenient season" for sincere repentance, and that before this most alarmingly increasing sin of PERJURY becomes a mill stone about the neck of the nation to drown it in perdition, political wisdom, if other wisdom should fail, may endeavour, by immediate and effectual remedies, to save it! If then, it appears, from the general opinion and practice of mankind, that OATHS judicially taken, or SWEARING upon certain interesting calls and occasions, is necessary to the order and support of society, as well as the satisfaction and peace of individuals; *so necessary*, that, without it, there can in many cases be no security; if God, by Revelation, warrants, and gives sanction to, this practice; if Jesus Christ, in the Gospel, allows and exemplifies such a usage; if His Apostles represent it as consistent in its application with right principles, and beneficial in its tendency; if succeeding ages, except for extraordinary reasons, have uniformly adopted it,

it, and if human laws, under the authority of the divine, require and enjoin our compliance, what have we to do but with a fullness of attention to consider it as a RELIGIOUS ACT of the highest solemnity and importance, in respect to God and man, to One as the steadfast Friend of Truth and the declared Avenger of Falsehood, to the other as having a claim upon our integrity, which cannot in this particular act, by any subterfuge, be made void, the voice of nature, the command of God, the precept of Christ, concurring to enforce its faithful accomplishment;—to examine, with the minutest exactness, our own hearts, that no plausible pretext may be concealed there, which will lead us into partiality, deception, or double dealing. For, when we appeal to the EVER LIVING GOD, and call upon him to be a WITNESS of the purpose and intent of our soul, all must be open, direct, sincere, and no Bias whatever, from selfishness, partiality, artifice, persuasion, or insinuation, must be suffered to overrule, or even interrupt, our attention to the OATH OF GOD, all knowing and all seeing, under the sanction of HIS  
EVER,

EVERLASTING GOSPEL. In every undertaking or engagement of this kind, whether with a view to the protection of innocence, the punishment of guilt, the execution of office and employment, or such as respect the choice of members to serve in parliament, which may be distinguished as an oath of privilege intended to prove qualification, residence, and identity, there should be the nicest and most vigilant concern to add to Faith, VIRTUE, that is, Fortitude, Resolution to resist most earnestly and constantly all opposition to Justice and Truth. Was this determination once fixed, as in every Christian breast it ought most devoutly, *all trifling* with oaths would be unknown; that “blackness of darkness” arising from such prostitution would be dispersed; temporal mischiefs and distresses would be prevented, and eternal safety, often risked and sacrificed as it is, preserved; and that detestable, that, morally and religiously considered, *monstrous*, politically experienced, *destructive* crime, PERJURY, the SWEARING FALSELY, OR VIOLATION OF OATH, would be heard of no more. To Heathens, who have marked it in the strongest terms



terms of just SATIRICAL spirit, it was always singularly offensive, and by some penally condemned. To Christians, the Purity of whose religion is abhorrent of all deceit, duplicity, and falsehood, it ought to be most severely reproachful, and stigmatized as a disgrace to their Name, which nothing but the most finished penitence can expunge. And, where *this* is not, it should be remembered, that, in addition to the torments of conscience, and a review of injuries brought by perfidiousness upon individuals or society, there is, and must be, a looking forward to vengeance even from the Throne of Mercy itself. For, though man may, in the very *worst* sense, be a liar, God must be true, whose decisions are founded in unalterable equity, and will be awarded as infallible evidence shall direct. Before his Tribunal no stratagem, however concerted, will avail, nor can any evasion screen the offender. Abandoned wickedness, however concealed, will then be "clear as the light, and just dealing as the noon day." The sentence will be short, but decisive; to the righteous, "Come ye blessed, enter into the kingdom prepared

prepared for you from the beginning of the world ;” to the wicked, in which division *perjured persons* are particularly ranked, “ Go ye cursed,” made so by extreme depravity, “ into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Whatever has been here suggested upon this most important, and, AT PRESENT, peculiarly interesting subject, when OATHS are so *frequently* administered, and so *freely* taken, and when a familiarity with the abuse of them, to the great detriment of society as well as, in different views, to the destruction of individuals, is so deplorably contracted, proceeds from an earnest regard as well for the Polity of the State, the best support of which TRUTH must always be, as for the Cause of Religion, of which it is the first and greatest Ornament. Amongst other means of counteracting that most dreadful effect of REIGNING LICENTIOUSNESS, one very promising is impressing with the nicest attention upon the minds of youth an abhorrence of common profane swearing, and of a lie or falsehood in all its kinds and shapes. Both are the meanest and most despicable

despicable vices, and both open a ready passage to false swearing, in the way of solemn oath, that is, PERJURY. What a gratification must such a discharge of duty be to parental affection? This is sterling fondness. What honour would it reflect on domestic government and preceptive care, when it evinced that masters and teachers paid due attention to the first and most important part of their charge, the forming the heart and manners? We are continually talking of accomplishments, but unhappily losing sight of the most substantial and valuable; for want of which others are nugatory and vain, and sometimes lures to, or instruments of, mischief and misery. The conclusion is, (may it obtain universal attention!) that "whatsoever things are true, just, honest, lovely, or of good report," it is our duty, our interest, our comfort, our reward, in respect to *time* as well as *eternity*, not only to "think of," but to inculcate, to vindicate, to enforce, and, above all, to practice THESE THINGS. But if THESE THINGS are neglected and counteracted; more especially, if the grand Tie of all, AN OATH, founded in  
and



and enforcing our natural and moral relations and obligations, THAT, which is for "Confirmation" be dissolved, where, as Lord Bacon remarks, are we to look for Stability or Expedient? Complicated Confusion will follow, and the Prospect, in every sense, political, social, and religious, must be dreadful.

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